cities is planned subject to expansion of pipeline infrastructure and increased availability of natural gas, and economic viability.

For hydrogen, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has recently set up a Hydrogen Corpus Fund with a corpus of Rs. 100 crore with contribution of major oil and gas companies and the Oil Industries Development Board (OIDB) for supporting research and development in various aspects of hydrogen, which could substitute a part of natural gas as transport fuel in future. Demonstration projects in pipeline include using 10% hydrogen in CNG at the R&D centre of India Oil Corporation at Faridabad in September, 2005 and a similar demonstration project later in Delhi.

In order to harness a new non-conventional sources of energy in the country, Government approved a CBM policy in July, 1997 for the exploration and exploitation of CBM gas, under which 16 CBM blocks have been awarded till date to various companies. Initial commercial production is expected to commence by next year. For tapping natural gas through underground coal gasification, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Skochinsky Institute of Russia for commercialization of natural gas through UCG. GAIL too have an MoU with the Government of Rajasthan for gasification of lignite. GAIL have tied up with ERGO Energy, Canada for establishing a pilot plant at Barmer in Rajasthan and at Mannargudi in Tamil Nadu.

At present, there is no commercial production of gas hydrates in any part of the world and the technology is only at the research and development stage, and in India also R&D activities are continuing.

Special dividend by oil PSUs

2927. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether major PSU oil companies have booked losses in the first quarter of the current fiscal and if so, whether there is any likelihood of their skipping dividends this year;

(b) whether the skipping of dividends by oil companies could adversely affect the non-tax revenue collection of the Centre for 2005-06 for Government being the largest shareholder of the oil PSUs; and

(c) whether the oil companies are likely to respond to the Centre's SOS for special dividends, by dipping into their reserve, which are meant for investments only?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Upstream Oil PSUs namely ONGC, OIL & GAIL have earned profits while Oil Marketing Companies, such as IOCL, IBP, HPCL & BPCL have suffered losses during the 1st quarter of 2005-06. The dividend for 2005-06 would depend on the financial performance of these companies for the full year.

(b) While oil companies continue to hope to pay dividends, if circumstances were to compel them to skip paying dividends, this would, of course, adversely affect the non-tax revenue of the Union Government.

(c) The Centre has issued no SOS for special dividends.

Beautification of temples in Uttar Pradesh

†2928. SHRI BHAGWATI SINGH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Uttar Pradesh has forwarded proposals/estimates to Central Government for beautification of Saifai pond and renovation of Kalivahan temple in district Etawah, Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of action taken by Government so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 102.49 lakhs during 2003-04 for beautification of Pucca Talab at Etawah in Uttar Pradesh. An amount of Rs. 46.90 lakhs also been sanctioned during 2005-06 for beautification of Kalivahan temple at Etawah in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.